

738

THE NONCONFORMIST

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A Monthly Record

EDITED BY
E. MINSHALL,
Organist and Director of the Music at the
City Temple, E.C.

No. 2.—FEB., 1888.

and Review.

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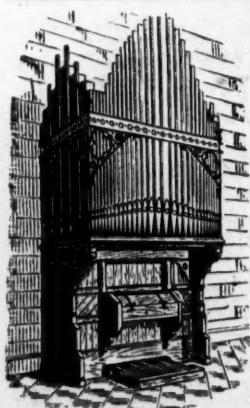
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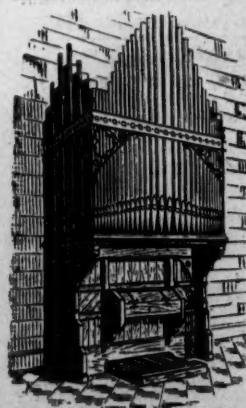
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We have every reason to be gratified by the very kindly notices that have appeared in the various papers concerning our first number, and we desire thus publicly to acknowledge our thanks for such generous recognition. The *Christian World*, which has done so much to excite interest in Nonconformist Church music, says, "The first number appears with contents that augur well for its success." The *British Weekly*, in the interesting column, "British Table Talk," says, "THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL makes an excellent start. We have seldom seen a better first number. Varied, attractive, and valuable, the journal is sure to make its way." The *Nonconformist* says the journal will "no doubt be valuable and practical. It will help in raising the tone of, and emphasizing the need for, really high-class music in Nonconformist churches." The *Freeman* gives us a "glad welcome," and adds, "The first number is full of promise. We think all our musical friends will be wiser and so far better who will take in and read this magazine. It deals with a subject upon which the more light that is thrown just now the better. Ignorance and her sister, Crotchedness, have at the present time too much influence on the service of song. The more fully sound information is given, the sooner these tiresome nuisances will shrink into obscurity, and one considerable hindrance to happy worship be removed." The *Christian News*, a Scotch paper, ably edited by Dr. Adamson, says, "We direct the attention especially of choir-masters, organists, and precentors to this journal, and commend it to all who desire to see the service of praise made more perfect in the Nonconformist churches of the land. It is edited by Mr. E. Minshall, of the City Temple, whose ability and enthusiasm are sufficient guarantee that it will be carried out with intelligence, spirit, and marked practical ability." The *Literary World* says the journal "should prove exceedingly interesting to its special constituency." The *Leeds Mercury* says, "The journal promises to do good and useful service, judging from the contents of the number before us. We wish it every success."

Were we to attempt to give extracts from all the

letters we have received from various parts of the country, approving of our first issue and wishing us success, we should have very little space for other matter. It has been utterly impossible to acknowledge the receipt of all these letters. Will our correspondents, however, be kind enough to accept our thanks? We can assure them we fully appreciate their expressions of good-will. We are specially grateful to many who have offered to do what they can to make the journal known. To such we may say that if prospectuses or specimen copies will assist them, they have only to let us know and a supply shall be forwarded to them. Our entrance into existence has been attended with much success. Our hope is that we may grow in usefulness and in public estimation.

We would call the attention of our readers to a letter from Mr. T. R. Croger, which appears in another column. Why should not Nonconformist choirs have their great festivals once or twice a year? Choral services, attended by large bodies of singers are held here and there; but they are by no means general. The combination of choirs for such a purpose is productive of much good. We should rejoice, therefore, if Mr. Croger's suggestion could be fully carried out. What have our readers to say about it?

WITH our March number we hope to give an anthem suitable for Nonconformist church choirs.

Congregational Anthems.

BY CHARLES DARNTON,
Organist at Park Chapel, Camden Town, N.W.

It is only of recent years that the use of anthems has become at all common in our Nonconformist churches. The first collection of any importance appears to have been the anthem part of the "Weigh House" series. But preceding this, there were some small and local ventures of the kind, and anthems taken from miscellaneous publications were used now and then for special occasions, though the favourite pieces other than hymns were chiefly such productions as "Denmark," "Vital Spark," etc. As these, however, were not generally supposed to be sung by the congregations, they would not come under our present idea of congregational anthems.

The writer has by him a copy of a very small and badly-printed book, prepared for the use of Craven Chapel, which must have been in use thirty years ago, or perhaps more, though no date is given. It contains six well-known pieces: Weldon's "O praise the Lord"; Richardson's "O how amiable"; Attwood's "Enter not into judgment," etc., with a sanctus or two. No doubt at that time this was considered a grand innovation, and was probably looked upon by some as the "thin end of the wedge" to an advanced Ritualism! So the world goes; for now this modest collection would be thought very slim indeed. The writer remembers how the term "High Chapel" (!) was used to describe the service at a certain Congregational

church when, nearly twenty years ago, chants and anthems of a rather advanced kind for that time were introduced.

In 1860, a tune-book, called "Devotional Psalmody," was published, edited by Mr. Wilson, precentor at that time at the Rev. J. C. Harrison's, Camden Town, which contained a few congregational anthems.

This was followed a few years after by a much larger collection of anthems, "Anthems for the Church and Home," which contained a number of new as well as standard pieces of the kind. About this time also a nice little book of chants and anthems, the latter about twenty in number, entitled "The Congregational Psalter," appeared, edited by Mr. J. Locke Gray, then organist at Lee Chapel. These two last were a great advance in interest and variety on the older books, and are still in use. The "Weigh House" collection was soon after this considerably enlarged, and has been very extensively adopted throughout the country. It contains many nice and useful compositions, but also many which may well be spoken of as some of our friends sweepingly speak of *all* congregational anthems, as "not worth singing." It certainly does not err, as some collections do, on the side of too much difficulty. Besides, however, the books prepared originally expressly for certain churches, there were collections of anthems issued by Messrs. Curwen, Davidson, and other publishers, and a few other private ventures, such as that by the Rev. S. March, these last having a very limited circulation.

All this time Dr. Allon was pursuing his labours in the interest of church music, and had issued the first part of his "Congregational Psalmist," containing tunes and chants, but had so far not attempted anthems, except to include in his chant-book Cecil's "I will arise," and a few sanctuaries, which may be considered an intermediate step between hymns and anthems. His idea appears to have been that such works were not congregational unless too simple to be interesting; at all events, it was not until 1872 that the anthem part of his work was published. It is needless to describe that book, as it is so well known. Dr. Allon's reputation, and the means at his command of introducing the book, added to the facts that it is a large and varied collection, and supplied a felt want, have caused it to be perhaps the most successful book of the kind ever yet published. Brief reference only need be made to more recent collections, such as Mr. Coleman's "Clapham Chant and Anthem Book," and the anthem part of the "Congregational Hymnal." These possess much the same characteristics as Dr. Allon's, some anthems being congregational in style, and others decidedly not.

It may be noted that the Baptists do not very often use anthems in their services, but the Wesleyans and Presbyterians frequently do; and the book of anthems issued in 1875 for the use of the Church of Scotland is a fine collection, though, like the other books mentioned above, it contains many which are not "congregational" at all. The Wesleyans appear generally to select their anthems freely from any quarter, as they do not expect any but the choir to sing them. And certainly if the congregation is not to sing the anthem, it is unnecessary and undesirable to be limited to any one collection. It

may further be noted that in some parts of the country, and in some large towns even, anthems have never been yet introduced, or are at all events not regularly used in the Nonconformist churches. The writer believes he is correct in saying that in no Nonconformist church in Bristol are anthems sung, except on such special occasions as anniversaries or "Services of Praise." This appears strange, as in musical matters generally Bristol is rather strong. The same remark applies to some other towns which possess excellent choirs in the churches.

But now it is time to ask, What are the essential characteristics of congregational anthems? Is the statement which is sometimes made, that "if anthems are easy enough for the congregation to sing they are not worth singing, or if they are musically good they cannot be sung congregationally," a true and fair representation of the case? By no means. We believe there is here a good field open for church musicians who can write well and yet simply. A "congregational" anthem is one which all persons in a congregation who are able to join intelligently in the hymns, each singing the part suited to his voice, may with a reasonable amount of care and a little practice sing correctly. It is not supposed that every unmusical and uneducated person can sing to edification in the anthem, but there surely ought to be, in these days of musical culture, a sufficient proportion of any average congregation able, if willing, to make reasonably simple anthems a pleasant and useful part of the service of song.

An anthem, to be truly congregational, must be *broad* and *solid*, and yet *flowing*, *well-phrased* and *melodious* in style. The harmonies must be *natural*, though not bald, and not necessarily devoid of modern chromatic chords if these are judiciously handled. Points of imitation, and antiphonal movement of the parts, need not be altogether avoided, but should be introduced sparingly, and skilfully managed when used. Anything like a regular fugue is out of the question in congregational music, but an aimless sort of scramble among the parts—the sign of want of power and skill on the part of the composer—is even worse. On the other hand, a dull monotony of full chords in ordinary progressions will soon become intensely uninteresting and wearisome. The *compass* should not be excessive for the several "parts," neither should there be a constant dwelling on a few notes, and although awkward and unsingable skips must be avoided, *some* skips are a great advantage. The *general tone* of the music should be *devotional*; which may be either in the sense of prayerful pleading, quiet cheerfulness, jubilant praise, or any other religious emotion admissible in psalmody. And, lastly, there should be *some* distinct *character* in the composition to redeem it from staleness and monotony. The reason why many so-called congregational anthems are dull, and do not "go" well, is that they consist of a series of diatonic chords and progressions arranged for the most part in stock phrases, without any definite aim, and no wonder if musicians often say they "are not worth singing." Variety and character are most important factors in all congregational music.

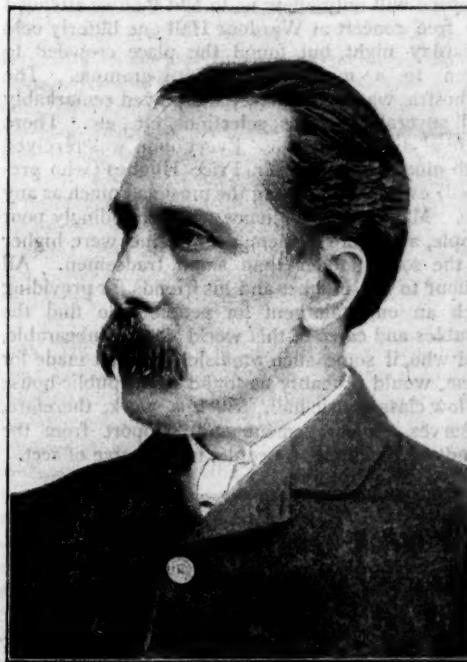
It must be acknowledged that there are not many

anthems which possess all the qualifications mentioned, but there are some; and, as before said, here is a wide field open for good composers who can bring musical skill, devotional feeling, and common-sense to supply the deficiency. A few such compositions would be a distinct gain to our churches.

In introducing anthems into our services, a great mistake is often made by using such as are really not adapted for the purpose, though perhaps very excellent for other purposes. If such pieces are sung by the choir alone, all may be well (though some so-called "congregational" anthems need a better trained and balanced choir than is generally found to render them efficiently), but this is not congregational singing; and although no objection need be made to a well-sung anthem by the choir alone, yet the inspiring effect of a large number singing in full harmony a suitable anthem, is not to be crowded out of our services as of no account.

(*To be continued.*)

Music at the Wesleyan West Central Mission.



RUMOUR had spread abroad a report that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and his co-workers had broken away from old traditions and customs and had "gone in heavily" for music in connection with the new Mission. We were not surprised at this, because Mr. Hughes is a man endowed with most liberal views in matters of this kind, and he is therefore willing to adopt any means whereby some may be saved. In his letter which appeared in our last number, he said that "music has been disastrously

neglected in the Nonconformist Churches," so we were anxious to know what he was doing in his new sphere of labour to remedy this defect.

First of all we found that the control of the music had been placed in the hands of Mr. Heath Mills (whose portrait we give above), a very good and painstaking musician, who undertook the work in an earnest and sympathetic spirit. For some years Mr. Mills had been connected with the Children's Home in Bonner-road, E., and had done much to raise the standard of the music in that excellent institution. The West-end Mission, however, offered a larger opening for his abilities, and on both sides a better appointment could hardly have been made.

The chief musical events in connection with the Mission are the three services on Sunday at St. James's Hall and the free concert at Wardour Hall on Saturday night, though preparations for these engagements necessitate several practices. A choir of some seventy voices has been formed to assist in the Sunday services; a brass band has been got together to accompany the afternoon service, and an orchestra for the evening service and the Saturday free concert. As Mr. Mills has to arrange most part of the Sunday music for both bands, in addition to his duties as conductor, his work is pretty well cut out for him.

Wishing to ascertain how the music "went" and was appreciated at these several services under these novel conditions, we resolved to attend the service at St. James's Hall one Sunday evening. It was announced to commence at seven, but we reached the Regent-street entrance nearly half-an-hour before that time. It was a pouring wet night, and on getting out of the omnibus and observing very few persons entering the building, we concluded there would be a very small congregation. Ascending the stairs, we heard the sound of violins, cornets, drums, etc., etc., and on reaching the door of the balcony we were more than surprised to find the large hall so full that it was with some difficulty we could find a seat. Yes, here were about two thousand people on a Sunday evening listening to the sweet strains of an orchestra of some forty performers. We discovered that the "opening voluntary" is half-an-hour long, and consists of a variety of pieces, to which the congregation listen with evident enjoyment. Certainly at the close of each piece we felt as if we ought to show our appreciation in the usual manner, but of course there was no applause. The people, however, by a little rustle and a gentle cough, showed clearly that their attention had been thoroughly taken up during the playing, and that they were for a moment or two free from the thralldom of sweet music. Upon this occasion the pieces played were Batiste's "Andante in G," the "Portuguese hymn" with variations, and a movement from one of Haydn's symphonies, all of which were performed very creditably indeed.

The service proper opened with the hymn, "At even, ere the sun was set." Mr. Hughes gave out the number of the hymn, and the band played the tune. After re-announcing the number of the

hymn and reading one verse, the people all rose, and led by the band, sang with much power. Oh, what a volume of tone ! but, as in almost all large congregations, there was a want of expression. The last verse, however, was sung with much more feeling. There was a lack of promptness in commencing each verse—in fact, the band was half-way through the first line before the people, as a whole, joined in. The hymn was followed by a short prayer, after which Mr. Hughes gave out "Art thou weary?" He, however, said that verse four must be omitted, as it was not true that Christians had "many a sorrow, many a labour," though no doubt it did apply in some cases. "We will omit that false verse, therefore," said he. The hymn was sung to the orthodox tune, "Stephanos," and exceedingly well it went, the light and shade being well marked. Mr. Mills began in somewhat slow time, but gradually increased the speed, till at the end it was a little too fast, if anything. The full power of the cornets in the line, "Sorrow vanquished, labour ended," was very stirring—indeed, the whole band seemed to play as if they had just returned from a victorious but hard battle. After a Scripture lesson, "Jesus, lover of my soul," was sung to "Hollingside," but it was too slow, and consequently rather heavy. From the number of notices given out it is abundantly evident that the workers in connection with this Mission do not intend to let the grass grow under their feet. Meetings of one kind or another take place every day of the week, and a large work is also done in visiting and relieving the poor of the neighbourhood. During the collection on behalf of the funds for carrying on the Mission, Gounod's "Nazareth" was played as a euphonium solo, accompanied by the other instruments, and very tastefully indeed it was executed. Mr. Price Hughes preached a most suitable sermon, which was listened to with much attention by the vast congregation. At its close the final hymn, "Just as I am," was sung with much tenderness. This ended the service, though an "after-meeting" was announced, to which a goodly number remained.

Taking the music as a whole, we were much impressed with it—especially with the heartiness the people seemed to throw into it. Though it could not be said to be artistic, it was such as touched the heart, and that is just what is wanted on such occasions. During the whole service we could not help regretting that the organ was not used in conjunction with the band. The great defect of the accompaniment was a want of foundation. It seemed almost all first and second violins, and very little bass. If the organ, with its broad tones and grand pedal notes, had joined in, the singing would have been greatly improved. Moreover, the want of attack in each verse, to which we have referred, would have been remedied. The lead of an organ is more distinct than that of an orchestra, and the people would at once respond. In accompanying congregational singing, a good-sized organ, judiciously played, is far better than an orchestra, though much greater effect can be obtained from both combined. We should therefore be glad if

Mr. Mills could see his way to leave the conductor's desk and take his seat on the organ-stool. Possibly at present the orchestra need some one to conduct, but after a little more experience they ought to be able to rely upon themselves. If Spohr's "Last Judgment" can be given in St. Paul's Cathedral without a conductor, four hymns ought to be sung in St. James's Hall without one. Further, though Mr. Mills conducted with great quietness and free from unnecessary gesticulation, the movements of a person beating time remind some people of the concert-room, and it is desirable as far as possible to avoid bringing such thoughts to the minds of the congregation at a religious service.

Of the success of the music there can be no doubt. The music usually heard at mission services is miserably poor stuff—in fact, more likely to drive people away than draw them in. Here, however, it is very different, and we congratulate the authorities upon the liberality shown in respect to it. Many of the large congregation that thronged St. James's Hall were probably attracted in the first instance by the music, but they must indeed have been hardened sinners if they did not get some good from Mr. Price Hughes's earnest and eloquent address.

Space will only allow us to add that we attended the free concert at Wardour Hall one bitterly cold Saturday night, but found the place crowded to listen to a most attractive programme. The orchestra was in full force, and played remarkably well several overtures, selections, etc., etc. There were also two vocalists. Every item was received with much applause, Mr. Price Hughes (who presided) evidently enjoying the music as much as any one. Many of the audience were exceedingly poor people, and none of them, we imagine, were higher in the social ladder than small tradesmen. All honour to Mr. Hughes and his friends for providing such an entertainment for people who find the troubles and cares of this world almost unbearable, and who, if some such provision was not made for them, would probably be found in the public-house or low class music-hall. Such a work, therefore, deserves encouragement and support from the hands of all Christian people, irrespective of sect.

Chapel Choirs and Small Choral Societies.

BY W. G. MCNAUGHT, A.R.A.M.,

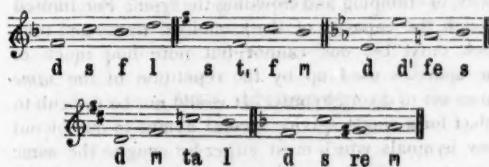
Assistant Inspector of Music, Education Department.

(Continued from page 12.)

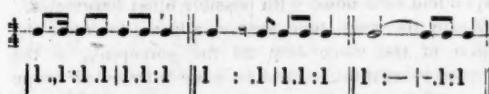
SIGHT-SINGING.—If in selecting members of a choir it is decided to require proof of ability to sing at sight, the tests given should not be difficult, and, unless the standard is unusually high, they should deal separately with time and tune. Thus, the tune tests should be timeless and the time tests tuneless—*i.e.*, on a monotone. It will generally be found sufficient if the tune tests are sung to sol-fa syllables or to the syllable *la*. Singers who can sing to words in time and tune at

sight quickly show their capacity. The little books of tests (printed in both notations*), largely used by teachers of singing in elementary schools, not only form a valuable collection of graduated musical exercises, but provide also a capital series of passages in time and tune that can be used as sight-singing tests.

III. The fact that singers who sing more by ear than by note, and who at the same time possess good voices and retentive memories, may turn out to be useful members of a choir has been already mentioned. If circumstances render it expedient not to insist upon sight-singing power, musical capacity can be gauged by asking candidates to imitate such tonal passages as—



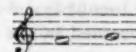
and such rhythmic passages as—



It is fairly certain that singers who can fluently imitate passages like the foregoing are capable of much greater things, and when, later on, they are persuaded to study systematically, they will develop into good readers. How to deal with this class of singers will be a matter for future remark. For the present it will be sufficient to insist that, in forming a choir, it is not good tactics to rigorously exclude good singers who are not good readers. The business of a choir-trainer, in the first place, is to get musical ability of all useful kinds under his control.

IV. The expediency of admitting boys into mixed voice choirs is a doubtful point. For the purpose of the Service of Praise they are undoubtedly often very useful, especially in small village choirs, and the training they get in practising is good for them, morally and musically. There is nothing to say against boys' voices as such. A choir of boys with fine, well-trained voices is, as we all admit, a choir of angels, albeit somewhat disguised, but the point to consider is the musical effect of boys singing with the ordinary mixed voice choir—*i.e.*, a choir composed of adults of both sexes. The facts, briefly stated, regarding boys' voices are that, under cultivation, they develop in power, range, and quality with great rapidity; that (differing in this respect from young girls' voices) they stand fairly hard training without the risk of injury being necessarily incurred; and, finally, that they have a *timbre* different from every class of voice. It is over this difference of *timbre* that the musical difficulty arises. Boys' voices do not naturally blend with the voices of adults of the other

sex. Some teachers make all boys sing alto; but this is a serious mistake. It is not the classification of nature. The best natural notes of most boys between, say, nine and twelve years of age lie above F or G.



To insist upon all boys singing notes a fifth or sixth lower is to invite strain, and deliberately risk a deterioration of the vocal organs that will show itself disagreeably in the man's voice. No one thinks of making all men sing bass in disregard of their natural capacities. If, then, it is found necessary to recruit a choir from boys, let them sing the part they can sing best, and devote careful attention to minimising the effect of their naturally unblending voices. Boys' voices need special training. It is almost impossible to prophesy what an untrained boy is capable of—the upper part of the voice sometimes develops so greatly under training. It is beyond the purpose of these brief hints to describe in detail an elaborate course of practice. A description of one or two exercises that have been found useful in training boys' voices must suffice. The object of these exercises is to discover and develop the upper or thin register, to secure a round, full tone on the chief vowels, and to impart flexibility. It may be necessary to inform some readers of these remarks that, while the compass of individual voices, when compared with one another, may be vastly different, one fact is common to all classes of voices: the two registers sometimes called "chest" and "head," but better called "thick" and "thin," overlap at about the same pitch, viz., at from D to C. The crotchetts in the



above show the tones that can be sung with either register; the quavers those that can be sung easily and sweetly only with the thin register; and the minims those that can be sung best only with the thick register. Now one great object in training boys' voices is to discover and develop the thin register. Boys, in their play and speech, are so accustomed to use the thick register that they are naturally tempted to sing with it, if possible, on all occasions, the result being unbearably flat and harsh. The following exercises have been found useful:—



Exercise 1 is for beginners. At first it should be sung to the syllable *koo*, *softly*, and perfect tune should be insisted upon, and then using the vowels described below. The key may be varied as skill and ease are attained.

Exercise 2 should be practised as follows:—1. With koo to each note. Slowly say $\text{I}=M\ 50$, taking great care that the last five notes are strictly in tune. Breath to

be taken after each group of four notes. 2. Faster, say $\text{J} = \text{M}\ 70$ to $\text{M}\ 90$ to *koo* and again to *kaa* (not a thin, strained *aa*, formed at the back of the mouth, but a round, smooth *aa*, formed at the front of the mouth, the lips being slightly rounded) and in higher keys, the upward limit being governed by the ability of the boys to sing the last four notes in tune and in groups of eight notes to a breath. 3. As before, to *koo*, *kaa*, *kai*, and *kee* (in front of the mouth, with slightly-rounded lips). 4. Using *koo*, etc., slurred to *four* notes. 5. Slurring two and detaching two staccato and increasing



ing the pace. In case it may be thought that these exercises may consume too much time, it may be mentioned that the 3rd, 4th, and 5th processes of practice described above, worked through completely in two keys, take only five or six minutes when the exercises are familiar. Boy altos should practise short downward phrases to the same vowels, detached and slurred. It is perhaps unnecessary here to go further into detail, but one general remark must be made. No boy should be allowed to use his voice freely when it is evidently on the point of breaking. The utility of young girls' voices in mixed-voiced choirs calls for only passing consideration. Young girls are rarely available for choir practices, and their voices are often so thin they cannot help the musical effect in any great degree. Besides, it is found that young girls' voices, as a rule, will not stand anything like the training that may be given to boys' voices with impunity.

It is difficult to secure and to maintain a proper balance of parts in a small choir. It is often better to put up with a balance not ideal than to reject singers. The inevitable ups-and-downs of a choir may cause a conductor to want the rejected ones for the very purpose that induced him to reject them, namely, to secure a balance.

The management and training of a choir as a whole will form the subject of the remaining remarks.

"One Hymn—One Tune."

By GAMBA.

WERE I to make my débüt in THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL with a reference to the question of "one man, one vote," I should doubtless be informed that the object of the paper lies far above party politics. Or, coming nearer to the realm of music, if I were to venture to discuss the merits of "the movable Doh" as compared with *Dō alias C*, I might be considered a little out of date. But a few rambling remarks on the growing tendency to allot to every hymn its own tune, for better or worse, may at least serve to elicit different opinions from some of your readers. I confess to be only feeling my way at present, and so adopt a suggestive, rather than a dogmatic, style.

That there are great advantages in coupling certain hymns and tunes goes without saying. Who would

dream of severing such alliances as these—"Jesus, lover of my soul," tune, "Hollingside"; "Saviour, again to Thy dear name," tune, "Ellers"? and there are many such instances of mutual adaptation. Grand hymns and tunes of this type may almost be left to take care of themselves, so deeply have they together made their mark throughout musical Christendom.

But is it not rather another thing to allot to *every* hymn its own tune, and to crowd hymns and tunes (and sometimes chants and anthems) all into one volume, which must not be too large to be portable, nor too restricted in its range of metre, style, and subject? The question seems to arise, can this be done without either sacrificing many good hymns and tunes, or cramping and crowding the type? For, limited though the capacity of the combined hymn-and-tune book must be, one cannot but note how much of the space is used up by the repetition of the *same* tunes set to divers hymns. It would not be difficult to select for a single service several hymns in one of our new hymnals which must either be sung to the same tune, or would involve the turning backward and forward, from words to music, or the reference to an independent tune book, with possibly other harmonies.

Again, the fixed tune system appears to credit the editor of the work with all the perception of the niceties of adaptation, and to leave little or no scope for this important factor in the composition of a good organist or choir-master. Some, it is true, may feel thereby relieved of the responsibility of choice; given the hymn, there is the tune, and the thing is settled at once. And this is an advance upon the state of things which existed when, for want of proper care and method, hymns were too often selected just as the minister was about to ascend the pulpit stairs, and the tune first appearing "to go" was pounced upon, not always, it must be added, of the right metre.

Departing from this slovenliness, may we not, however, rush to the opposite extreme, and be landed in a realm of stereotyped proprieties? And is there to be no scope for what Mr. Curwen of honoured memory used to call "gumption"? May I take an illustration of my meaning from the City Temple? On one occasion I there heard the fine L. M. hymn, beginning "Lord, I was blind," taken to a 9.9.9.9 tune, "Theodora," by simply slurring two notes in each line. A more beautiful adaptation of tune to hymn I think I never heard. It is the loss of this kind of freedom or scope in selection (very likely to result from the fixed tune system) which one would deprecate. Where your tune has been already selected for you, and the adoption of another, no matter how much more convenient or adapted you may think it to be, would look like pedantry, the motive for careful personal study of the points of both hymn and tune will be overpowered, and you will most likely bow to the inevitable.

As many hymns seem to be suited equally well with two or more tunes, and not a few good tunes have an elasticity which renders them in turn fairly suitable for different hymns, one is not yet quite reconciled to the thought of banishing a good tune book with its, say, 500 or 600 tunes, in favour of much smaller collections, in which many are duplicates.

There is, I must not forget, the question of expense, and this is an important item. But the cost of separate tune books might be got over to a greater extent than has already been done by the more general use of "single voice parts." We require for use at the piano for home practice a copy or two of the full score, but rarely have need of more than one's own voice part in the choir or in the pew. In handing a lady stranger a tune book you may be certain that the male voice parts will not be wanted, while in the case of a gentleman it would not be uncomplimentary to inquire whether he would prefer a tenor or a bass copy. If he should be musical, he, in turn, need not be troubled with the "soprano." But this is wandering, and therefore I close abruptly for the present.

Choir Singing.

By F. G. FIRCH,
Precentor of Christ Church, Enfield.

THIS paper is restricted solely to the consideration of choir singing in relation to the congregation, either as leaders of, or singers to, the people. Discussion on the internal organisation of the choir has here no place. Let it be granted that a competent and well-balanced choir exists. The question before us is how the choir can best be utilised in the service of praise.

In the first place, the choir in relation to the congregation demands attention. The choir should set before themselves no other motive than the glory of God in song. This excludes individual predominance, and necessitates a high standard of excellence. However imperfect man's efforts may be in the sight of God, He cannot be displeased with the best his powers enable him to give. But nothing less than his best is permissible. A conscious effort should be made by every member of a choir to sing to the best of his or her ability. This requires the due exercise of the voice, a clear enunciation, and a nice regard of light and shade. Moreover, the singing must be universal and not particular, and the shades of expression must not be marred by the prominence of any particular part or voice. It often happens that when a choir attempts to sing softly some part, or even an individual voice is brought into prominence. This should not be. The "nuances" should be studied beforehand, and all the voices should sink or swell together. The temptation to remain silent should be severely resisted. How often the precentor is pained in looking round to see a singer here and there in silence. It may be urged that the occasional cessation from singing of one or two would not matter. True; but where is the line to be drawn? If two, why not three? if three, why not four? if four, why not five? and so on, until, by a *reductio ad absurdum*, the whole choir might be silent. The members of the choir should not be content with singing their own part, but should listen for the other parts as well, and endeavour to realise in their own minds the harmonious whole. This is an important matter in tending to keep the choir up to pitch. When one part sings the same notes as another part, as must generally

be the case in four-part singing, and observation is made between the two parts, any difference in pitch is readily detected, and the instantaneous attention to the organ note sets the delinquents right. Every member of a choir should make a distinct effort to keep the pitch up to that of the organ. The soprano and tenor parts are the most responsible for flattening. This can only be successfully resisted by listening to the organ, and correcting the voice by it. The choir should allow no dragging. This is not so much produced by the speed of the singing as by the want of attention to rhythm. The accents should be carefully attended to, and no deviation from the rhythmical movement of the piece should be tolerated. But the choir must not sing at a pace that is unfair to the congregation. The congregation will include singers, good, bad, and indifferent, and a fair average should be struck, and the pace suited to it. The pace will consequently differ with different congregations, and will be accelerated as any particular congregation improves in singing.

In the second place, the congregation in relation to the choir is to be considered. The Free Churches suffer from a variety of hindrances which are unknown in the Episcopal Church. Many Nonconformists, and, it must be sorrowfully added, of the worthiest and wealthiest among them, deprecate any attempt to improve the singing. They therefore used to oppose the introduction of an organ, and they now combat the formation of a choir and the introduction of chants and anthems. They are gradually being defeated all along the line, but too often an irritation remains, and the good people are never quite reconciled to the innovations they deplore. It is useless to argue with these persons. Their very conscientiousness prevents the successful removal of what are really nothing but prejudices. If in the worship of heaven song and music be but a tithe of what is represented in the Bible, it is much to be feared that certain persons will require a painful apprenticeship before they will be competent to join with harp and song in the rhapsodies of heaven. But even excluding opponents, there is often a great want of expressed sympathy between congregation and choir. Often no word of encouragement is ever given, no vote of thanks passed, and any donation for an occasional excursion or friendly meeting refused or grudgingly bestowed. What bright exceptions there are to all these discouragements! How some members of a congregation are a joy and inspiration to the choir, and the thought of their kind appreciation and generous gifts nerves them to their task with ever-increasing assiduity and zeal. But it is to the service itself that these remarks are more particularly addressed. Here the converse of much that has been addressed to the choir is applicable to the congregation. If the choir are to sing well, the congregation are surely to devote their energies to do so likewise. If the motives of the choir are to be high and lofty, so also are those of the congregation to be, and if silence is not to reign in the choir, neither is it in the congregation. Some portions of the musical service should be such as all can join in. Oh, what a sublimity of multitudinous acclaim would be reached if every individual in a large congregation were accepting the lead of the choir, to

sing with heart and voice some familiar strains of worship, adoration, and praise. In this exercise should the cultivated singer remain silent? If such were the case, it would be nothing but inappropriate and blame-worthy. It is very discouraging to see cultivated singers standing silent while the hymn ascends to God. They are injuring themselves, they are injuring others, and too late perhaps they may awake to the consciousness that their abstention has been displeasing to God. The choice of the music is often a matter of difference of opinion amongst the members of a congregation. Some worthy members have expressed the opinion that nothing should be sung that cannot be joined in by the most ignorant and least cultivated person in the congregation. As well might the minister reduce his sermon to the level of the intelligence of a child of three years of age. The true rule is to supply something for everybody. The well-known hymns and tunes for all, the chant for the great majority, and the anthem for the few. It is not to be expected that persons with no knowledge of music should sing the anthem. In many anthems which are truly congregational, passages are given for the different parts, and these cannot be effectively sung by the congregation as a whole. It is not conducive to edification to hear detached passage for the soprano voices accompanied by a rumble of men's voices two octaves below. While thus the congregation should sing in strict subordination to common sense, all sections should have their turn, and, for instance, the children. They have little enough to interest them in the service; and it would seem only reasonable that in the morning service a hymn and tune suitable for children should be sung, and people of older growth might not find it unpleasurable to join in. Thus the musical service would supply exercise and scope for all, and be looked forward to with interest and taken part in with pleasure.

In the third place, the choir, as singers to the people, merits a few remarks. Assuming, as has been done, that the church is possessed of a competent and well-balanced choir, it seems only reasonable that they should be heard, either occasionally or regularly, the congregation remaining silent. Probably this proposition would meet with resistance where it has not been tried. It will be found, however, that its opponents will restrict their efforts to its introduction into the church, while they advocate it in mission-halls, temperance meetings, and such-like gatherings. The consistency of these persons is not easy to appreciate. They acknowledge the power of music in the mission-halls, etc., and rejoice in the assemblages gathered thereby, but view with horror anything of the kind in the house of God. It is a performance, they say. If by performance is meant something "done thoroughly," so it is; but if by performance is meant a "show off" of the choir without benefit to the congregation, then such singing as is here advocated it certainly is not. As well call the singing of Mr. Sankey and his choirs a show off as so miscall the others. Considering that in Nonconformist churches reading, praying, and sermonising are done for the people, why should not singing be added to the list? Again, it is customary for the organist to play an organ solo during collections. Say he plays "O rest in the Lord," from *Elijah*,

imitating as well as he can the human voice. Why should not that air be sung by a human voice, the organist accompanying? Say the organist plays an anthem or chorus from one of the oratorios, why should not the choir sing it to the accompaniment of the organ. If there be any real objection to the choir singing, the congregation listening, why do Nonconformists crowd the cathedrals and churches where there is such singing. Surely, if it is wrong in one place it is in another, and Nonconformists are inconsistent in encouraging in the Episcopal Churches what they reprobate in the Free Churches. But it will be said that robust Nonconformists do object to the thing everywhere, and it is only the young and impressionable who seek it. While not admitting the accuracy of this statement—far from it—let it be granted, for the sake of argument, and what follows? The young and impressionable, failing in obtaining that interest in the services they seek, obtain it elsewhere. Having thus accustomed themselves to the ritualism of the Episcopal Church, they gradually become reconciled to it, and they and their help and strength are lost to Nonconformity. This is going on all over the country. It occurs especially amongst the well-educated, and it is rare to find the well-educated children of prosperous Nonconformists remain in the Free Churches. Can it be suggested that, after all, Nonconformity is an error, and is dying out? or does its constant drain—likely, as some think, to bleed it to death—arise from the prejudices and lack of wisdom of leading representatives and from failure in the elasticity and tolerance of innovations which are necessary in consequence of the development of education and the spread of culture and refinement of this generation? Depend upon it, a feeling of soreness and irritation is growing up among the lovers of music at the intolerance of change in stereotyped forms. A longing for greater freedom in the musical service is arising, and people are beginning to look in the direction of the Established Church for freedom from those restraints which are so galling in the Free Churches. Surely all friends would agree in this proposition that a practice is not necessarily wrong because it is common in the Episcopal Churches, and the question for consideration should be, Can choir singing be so conducted as to be a means of spiritual service to the congregation? If there is ground for believing it can, then away with prejudice and all the enfeebling wraps of custom and routine and give it a trial. If it does not succeed, give it up; but if it does, thank God that something more has been done to retain worshippers, attract outsiders, and provide more aspirants for heaven. Think what Nonconformists lose by their abstention. Think of the libraries of music composed by pious men to words either of Scripture or other religious composition. There they lie unread, unopened, and unused, so far as Nonconformists are concerned. They are adapted to every conceivable occasion. They are instinct with grandeur, pathos, and poetry. They are illuminating, revealing, and spiritualising. They throw an entirely new and original light upon Scripture, and that not only of well-known phrases, but of recondite and obscure ones. These imperishable but unknown works are hidden from the sight and ear, for reasons which are hardly expressed, or, if expressed, do not bear examination.

Then consider what a fund of interest and inducement to practise is excited in the choir by the study of these works. Every choirmaster knows that to produce excellence in the singing of hymn-tunes it is quite useless merely to practise hymn-tunes. Something more difficult must be done, and what can be more conducive to good singing than the study of the sacred masterpieces of the great composers. To produce excellence in singing, even these works must be supplemented by secular music of a lighter character. But the point is that the study of these works without the presentation of them to an audience is uninteresting; but with that object in view and such a stimulus to exertion they form the very inducement that is required. Fortunately for the views here advocated, the practise of choir singing is more common than perhaps may be thought. Without unduly trespassing on the space allotted to this article, it would be impossible to give all the arguments for and against choir singing to the congregation. They will be found admirably summarised and enforced in chapter vii. of "Common Praise,"* by that well-known organist and choirmaster, Mr. F. G. Edwards. If, after perusing that chapter, any one with the premises we have assumed should fail to advocate a trial of the experiment, would be past argument, and must be left sorrowfully to perpetuate, if able, the prejudices of an effete and obsolete traditionalism.

Reviews.

Alla Marcia in C. Minuet in D, composed for the organ by D. R. Munro. E. Donajowski, 11, Little Marlborough-street, W. Two well-written pieces, presenting no serious difficulties. The latter will certainly be popular.

Hummel's Polonaise Op. 70. Arranged by D. R. Munro. An excellent arrangement.

The Voice of Jesus. Song by Charles Darnton. Robert Cocks & Co. An effective setting of the well-known hymn, "I heard the voice of Jesus say." Vocalists requiring such a song cannot do better than get this.

Give Ear to my Prayer, O God, and Sing, O Heavens. Anthems by Charles Darnton. Curwen & Sons, 8, Warwick-lane, E.C. Two good anthems, which are within the powers of an ordinary choir. The latter is termed a "festival anthem," and is exceedingly bright.

Providence-place (Cleckheaton) Congregational Church Music Series. *Twelve Psalm Tunes*, set to favourite hymns, by Walter H. Wright. There are some well-written, melodious tunes in this little series. The best to our mind being "Fern Holme."

Te Deum. No. 2 of the same series. A simple arrangement that any congregation could very quickly learn.

PAYMENT to singers has sometimes taken an odd form. When Mdlle. Zelie, a vocalist from the Théâtre Lyrique, at Paris, was at the Society Islands, she agreed to sing and receive in exchange a third part of the receipts. When counted the prima donna's share was found to consist of three pigs, twenty-three turkeys, forty-four chickens, and five thousand cocoanuts, besides considerable quantities of bananas.

* J. Curwen and Sons, 8, Warwick Lane, E.C.

Echoes from the Churches.

(Paragraphs for this column should reach us by the 20th of the month.)

METROPOLITAN.

ANERLEY.—The Congregational Church (Rev. J. Halsey, pastor) have unanimously adopted Dr. Allon's "Congregational Psalmist Hymnal."

CHRIST CHURCH, WESTMINSTER.—A performance of a new oratorio, "The Captives of Babylon," was given at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge-road, on Monday evening, the 9th ult., under the direction of the composer, Mr. George Shinn, Mus. Bac. Cantab. The soloists were Madame Lita Jarrett, Miss Meredith Elliott, Mr. Edwin Smith, and Mr. Robert Poole, and their respective renderings of the parts entrusted to them gave great satisfaction to composer and congregation. The choir of 150 voices (consisting of the members of the Christ Church choir and of various church choirs in South London) rendered the choruses with accuracy and expression. The accompaniments were played on the organ, with the addition of a grand piano and cornet. Mr. F. G. Shinn, A.C.O., presided at the piano, and Mr. Alder played the cornet, the organ being in the hands of the church organist, Mr. J. R. Griffiths, who treated it orchestrally, and gave an idea of the wood "wind" parts of the score. The Rev. Newman Hall prefaced the proceedings by a succinct description of the places referred to in the narrative. The author of the words, Mr. James Shepherd, was present, and the whole performance gave great pleasure to a large audience.

CITY TEMPLE.—There was a contralto competition in connection with the Free Concerts on the 19th ult. The prize of two guineas, which was awarded by the audience by means of voting cards, was won by Miss A. A. Hora.

CRAVEN CHAPEL.—On Boxing-night, the pastor (Rev. Arthur Hall) gave an entertainment to nearly one thousand of the poor and solitary, exhibiting dissolving views, and assisted by a number of friends with music, readings, etc. Each guest received a book and refreshments. The interest was kept up from 7 till 10.30, and all went away pleased with the evening's enjoyment.

CRAVEN HILL.—The first concert of the Bayswater Choral Society in connection with the Congregational Church was given in the lecture room of this church on Tuesday, the 17th Jan. Mendelssohn's 42nd Psalm, Weber's Jubilee Cantata, and a miscellaneous selection of solos and part-songs formed the programme. The vocalists were, Mrs. Stanesby, Miss. A. Molson, Mr. Henry Beaumont, Mr. R. Budd, and Mr. J. R. Williams, R.A.M. The accompaniments were played on the piano by Mrs. Layton, and harmonium by Mr. W. Newberry. Mr. Fred. W. Noakes conducted.

CROUCH HILL.—The syllabus of the Psalmody Association in connection with the Presbyterian Church, besides the church hymns and anthems, contains Handel's "Messiah," several cantatas, choruses, and solos, two organ recitals, and three concerts.

KENTISH TOWN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.—The fund for erecting a new organ in this church is growing very satisfactorily. It was started by a concert by the Royal (Poland-street) Hand-bell Ringers, Nov. 18th, realising £22. This was followed by a new year's conversation, which realised a further £35. Donations made the sum up to nearly £300. The Rev. T. McDougall Mundie, Mr. Edward Smith, organist, and a special committee are actively at work getting subscriptions and promises. Mr. Arthur Berridge, one of the members, has composed a pianoforte piece, "Tuque Bleu" (now in the press),

and dedicated the same, by permission, to Mrs. McDougall Mundle, by which it is hoped to further augment the fund.

LAVENDER HILL.—A performance of Handel's "Messiah" was given in the Congregational Church on Monday, January 23rd, by the South-West Choral Society, assisted by an orchestra. There was a very good attendance, the church being well filled. The conductor was Mr. A. Bond (of the South London Prize Choir), the choirmaster of the church, and the choir and orchestra numbered 100. The soloists were Misses Hardy and Hayter, and Messrs. David and Holder. Miss Hardy's beautiful rendering of "I know that my Redeemer liveth" was loudly applauded, as was also Miss Hayter in "He was despised." Mr. Holder was in excellent form, and sang "Why do the Nations?" very finely. The band played the opening fugue extremely well, also the Pastoral Symphony, and the accompaniment to "He shall feed his flock" greatly delighted the audience. The chouruses went splendidly, the "Hallelujah" and the much-neglected chorus, "The Lord gave the word" being especially good. Altogether, the performance gave very great satisfaction to the large company present. Mr. J. T. Corbin, the organist of the church, presided at the organ.

NORTH LONDON.—The choirs connected with the Presbyterian churches in the North of London, having formed themselves into an association, will hold a demonstration in Stoke Newington Church on the 7th of February at 8 p.m.

THORNTON HEATH.—A new organ has been built in the Congregational Church.

UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.—A large audience assembled, on the 10th ult., in spite of an exceptionally dense fog, to hear an organ recital by Mr. Fountain Meen. Madame Antoinette Sterling contributed "The Lost Chord" and two other songs in beautiful style. The organ music was admirably selected and brilliantly executed.

WOOD GREEN.—A series of "Pleasant Evenings for the People" is now being given in connection with the Congregational Church.

PROVINCIAL.

BATH.—The organ in Argyle Chapel is being rebuilt by Mr. Sweetland. The new instrument will have three manuals.

BRADFORD.—A series of concerts has been organised in connection with the Wesleyan Chapel at Manningham.

BURNLEY.—Miss J. Horner, on leaving Burnley to pursue her studies at the Royal Academy of Music, has been presented with an album containing portraits of members of the choir of Bethesda Chapel, of which she has been a highly valued member.

CARDIFF.—An organ, costing £800, has been placed in the Wesleyan Chapel, and was opened by Mr. T. Biggs.

ELLAND.—The young people in connection with the United Methodist Free Church and Sunday-school have given a concert, by which £11 has been raised. The proceeds were devoted to the purchase of crockery for the school.—An organ recital was given last month in the Congregational Chapel by Mr. A. N. Shaw, a blind student at Worcester College.

EPSOM.—"The Christian's Armour," a new composition by Roeckel, was performed in the Congregational Church on the 19th ult., in aid of the Sunday-school fund.

FROME.—An organ recital was given in Wesley Chapel on Thursday, January 19th, by Mr. W. Haydn

Cox, of Bristol. Mr. H. Welhan was the vocalist. There was a fairly large audience, who thoroughly enjoyed a very interesting programme.

LEEDS.—A thanksgiving service was held on New Year's Day in Salem Chapel, when special offerings were made towards reducing the church expenses for the past year. The choir, largely augmented, sang Handel's "Messiah," and there was a very large congregation.

LONG BUCKBY.—At a recent sale of work the sum of £22 10s. was realised for the purchase of a new harmonium.

LONG SUTTON.—An American organ has been placed in the school connected with the Congregational Church.

NEATH.—The young people connected with the English Presbyterian Church rendered good service on the 5th ult., by their performance of the cantata "Joseph." Mr. D. E. Thomas was the efficient conductor.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Mr. John A. Bryson, organist of Bath-lane Church for 27 years, has, on retiring from that position through ill-health, been presented with an illuminated address and a gold watch and chain.

NORTHAMPTON.—On Thursday evening, January 19th, an organ recital and sacred concert was given in Commercial-street Chapel by Mr. H. Bowles, the organist, assisted by the choir and friends, under the conductorship of Mr. E. J. Biggs. The various items in the programme were very creditably performed. The Rev. J. Gasquoine, B.A., presided.

RICHMOND HILL.—Mr. Kingston has given an organ recital in the Congregational Church every Friday afternoon in January. The attendance has been good and appreciative. Special music was sung on Christmas Day.

SALE.—On Wednesday, Jan. 11th, the annual soiree, in connection with the Congregational Church, was held in the schoolroom, and was attended by a large number of the members and friends of the congregation. A very pleasing programme of music was gone through, under the direction of the organist, Mr. E. C. Grindrod, as well as recitations and speeches by Rev. A. Scott and other friends.

SALTASH.—An organ has been provided for the Sunday-school in connection with the Baptist Chapel.

THEDDINGWORTH.—The Congregational Church has adopted "The Congregational Church Hymnal." A bazaar held in the National Schoolroom on behalf of the Manse Restoration Fund realised £75.

THORNHILL.—A small organ, built by Mr. Alf. Kirkland, has been recently opened by Mr. A. J. Blackburn in the Christian Brethren Chapel.

WESTGATE-ON-SEA.—The second of the series of popular entertainments for this winter was held on Tuesday evening, the 10th inst., and consisted of "The Musical Aesop," rendered by a choir of children and adults. The Rev. T. Blandford presided and gave the readings. "The Burlesque Band," included in the music, caused much interest and amusement, and was heartily encored, as also were the song and chorus, "The Farthing Rushlight," sung by Miss Edith Blandford and the choir, and "The Silly Gander." There were six poetical recitations of fables, which were well rendered by three of the girls and two of the boys. There was a good audience, and in every way the evening proved a great success. Mr. A. G. Lockwood proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs. and Miss Blandford for the pains they had taken in the training of the children, and to all who had taken part in the concert.

WEYBRIDGE.—An organ recital and sacred concert

was given on Jan. 19th, in the Congregational Church, in aid of the organ reparation fund, the instrument having been thoroughly cleaned and rebuilt at a cost of £85. The organ selections were from Mendelssohn, Viviani, Haydn, Frost, Rossini, and others, including one original composition, and were ably rendered by Rev. E. W. Tarbox, of Woking. The vocalists were Miss Hettie Schindler, of the R.A.M., Mr. Fitzwater, and Mr. Moir, and the Choral Society sang several selections. Miss Schindler was very warmly received, and her fine contralto voice was very effective in Sterndale Bennett's "O Lord, Thou has searched me" and "The Lost Chord." Rev. E. W. Tarbox accompanied.

WEST HADDON.—A purse of money has been presented to Mr. W. West, organist of the Baptist Chapel, by the choir and a few friends, in recognition of his services.

Correspondence.

(*We shall be glad to receive communications from any of our readers on questions likely to be of general interest.*)

THE ORDER OF SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—I am very glad to see the new journal devoted to the musical interests of the churches, and sincerely hope it may meet with the support it deserves. I note the letter of "Musicus," in which he expresses a desire for something better than the old-fashioned service of three hymns, three prayers, and a sermon. I think the more musical the service is, the more likely is it to find acceptance with the people. What is the reason the ritualistic services are so much approved? Is it not that music forms a prominent part? and although all choirs are not capable of very elaborate chant and anthem singing, yet the average congregation can join in singing the hymns which all know. The form of service in our church (Roath-road Congregational, Cardiff) is very simple, but very hearty and earnest. As a rule we open with an anthem, then follows a brief prayer, hymn, reading (Old Testament lesson), hymn, reading (New Testament lesson), general prayer, hymn, sermon, hymn, and benediction. Such a form I commend to "Musicus" as an improvement on what he now has. Yours truly,

CONGREGATIONAL.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,—Your journal ought to prove a great success, as we Noncons. want an organ of our own, for mutual help and stimulus on the subject of music in our worship.

Perhaps the order of service which has found acceptance in our chapel here for a very long time past may be helpful to "Musicus," although, after the old-fashioned, quiet "order" to which he has been accustomed, ours may be too sweeping a change all at once. However, if he can introduce more singing gradually, I predict that neither he nor the congregation will care to return to the older and duller order of service.

Our service is bright and cheerful, and helpful alike to minister and people. "Musicus" will see we do not forget the children, which is an important feature.

I give the order for our morning service; in the evening we substitute an ordinary hymn for the children's hymn:

Sanctus, or Short Anthem—Prayer (short)—Hymn—First Reading—Chant—Second Reading—Children's Hymn—Prayer (Notices)—Hymn—Sermon—Hymn—Benediction.

During the winter months we are giving occasional services of Gospel-song *after* the ordinary evening service. Not being able to find any one service of song suitable for our purpose, we make a selection from musical leaflets published by the Sunday School Union, Curwen, Pitman, etc.; also using Sankey's collection for hymns in which the whole congregation may join. A few appropriate verses of Scripture between each piece are read. Hitherto we have had large congregations, and we are hopeful that these special efforts may be productive of good.

I am aware that the idea of *singing the Gospel* is not a new one, but perhaps "Musicus," and others who have not yet ventured out of the beaten track, might take the hint with profit to themselves as well as to others.

Yours truly, H. C. BOTWRIGHT.

MUSICAL INCONGRUITIES.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—It was recently the writer's lot to be present at two *In Memoriam* services—not, of course, at the same time, nor yet in the same place of worship, nor indeed in connection with the same section of the Christian Church—the first relating to an old member of fifty years' standing, and the second to a pastor who had ministered on the spot thirty years or more. In the first case the hymns had evidently been chosen so as to harmonise both with the occasion and the subject of the discourse (which was "The earthly house and the building of God"), and also so as to lead the minds of the worshippers from the perishable to the imperishable, and from the sorrowful to the joyous. Accordingly, in the earlier portion of the service, we had such hymns as "And must this body die" (set properly enough, too, to "Shawmut"), and "I'm kneeling at the threshold" (to "Rutherford"), while at the close we had "High in yonder realms of light" (to Gilbert's splendid tune, "Maidstone"). But what was my chagrin to hear first the organist and then the choir "rattle" the dying body "over the stones" of "Shawmut" *fortissimo*, and at the rate $\text{J} = 160$. Surely common decency demands that the first verse, at least, should be sung as slowly and as softly as possible. The remainder of the hymn will, of course, bear an accelerated *tempo*, and if it had been thus rendered the effect would have been extremely telling. Shortly afterwards we had "I'm kneeling at the threshold" at $\text{J} = 126$, which absolutely broke the spell of the hymn, and compelled one to think of the strong man "rejoicing to run a race," rather than of the aged pilgrim, "weary, faint, and sore," at the end of life's journey. To this hymn I should regret to hear "Rutherford" at a greater rate than $\text{J} = 80$.

The remaining hymns being lighter were more consonant with the loud and rapid singing to which they were treated; but we were doomed once more to have our thoughts and feelings turned completely upside down; at the close, out breaks the organ with the *Dead March in Saul* (!) and this at the rate $\text{J} = 100$!! In such a service, O noble army of mar—I mean, organists, give us the *Dead March* at the commencement if you choose, but even then let it be like a march to Abney Cemetery, and not like a Bank-holiday drive to Epping Forest; at the close, however—and at such a close—if you have any pity, for heaven's sake spare us!

At the second service, I regret to say that not a single hymn had any specific appropriateness to the occasion. Then, as to the tunes, we had first "Tottenham," the most joyous C.M. tune in the whole of the Bristol Tune-book—this being followed by others

of a similar type such as "Huddersfield" (S.M.) and "Nottingham" (7s). At the conclusion of the service the organist played with much taste "I know that my Redeemer liveth," which came as a refreshing breeze on a hot summer's day; but for the rest—as far as the musical portion of the service was concerned—we might have been at a May meeting at Exeter Hall!

I am tempted to refer also to one other instance of the incongruous in a totally different kind of service, held in a spacious building, where an excellent congregation had assembled. Here, too, were an ample choir, one of Foster and Andrew's best organs, and an organist of no mean ability as regards command over manuals and pedals. The opening hymn was, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (sung to "Sanctissimus"), which without being difficult to interpret, affords a good test of the expository instincts of organist and choir. Variety of expression there certainly was, but it was mechanical rather than natural, by "rule and compass," and not by sympathy with the varied sentiment of the hymn. So, as ill-luck would have it, some of the tenderest passages came in for loud renderings, the "trembling and fearfulness" being given *forte*, and the recurring line "Kneel and adore Him," etc., *fortissimo*, with apparently full organ.

Miss Braddon, in her "Hostages to Fortune," giving an account of an Eisteddfod held at the famous little Spa of Llandrindod during one of her visits, represents the inimitable Kilsby shouting to the conductor of a victorious choir, who was about to receive the prize at the hands of one of the most charming young ladies on the platform, "Kneel, you blockhead; this is the proudest moment of your life!" And we can pardon shouting in a scene like that; but for a congregation in a place of worship to shout, and an organ to bellow forth with all its might, "Kneel and adore Him, the Lord is His name!" seems to the writer the very acme of the unsympathetic and the incongruous. These are small matters, it may be, in the estimation of many; but to most people they are small matters upon which great ones depend, upon which it depends, for instance, whether a hymn tune is to remain a grim skeleton sitting in its bones, or to be clothed first of all with flesh, and then with beautiful well-fitting garments, and so appear in its right mind! Speaking generally, the last decade has witnessed wonderful improvements in the psalmody of our churches; but such cases as I have detailed—due to incompetence or thoughtlessness, or both—are typical of a host of others by which the spirit of devotion is still oft being rudely driven forth from the courts of the temple and from the breast of the worshipper.

Welcoming your excellent journal in its monthly visits, congratulating you upon the splendid commencement which it has made, and wishing it all possible success,—I remain, yours, etc.,

S. H. A. D.

ATTENDANCE AT CHOIR PRACTICES.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

SIR.—Might I say one or two words through your columns to "A Choirmaster" who writes in your last number respecting attendance at practices.

The best method of ensuring regularity greatly depends upon the authority one possesses and the material that exists for working upon. I do not doubt that a few words to the choir, clearly and forcibly put, may be made most effectual. To the conceited ignoramus point out specially that the greatest of players in London will not perform without their afternoon rehearsal together. To the more gifted irregular ones enforce strongly the necessity of their attendance as an

example, and as a real help to the others and to the musical cause itself.

If words are not successful you may resort to plans. Nothing, I think, would help you more in this way than a congregational practice, if it is possible, on Sunday evening or any other time. Again, you would gain in bringing forward new music, by stating exactly when it is to be sung first in public service, and take care to make its progress known from time to time to irregular members.

In the event of neither words nor plans of this sort having effect, I think you might (at your discretion) almost resort to tricks, but these can only be planned to suit special cases.

I have the training of two choirs, and usually take seven practices during the week; judging from this experience, the soundest advice I can give is—Go ahead with the few who now rally round you, plunge into new music, insist upon having it, and the many will follow. You will thus have awaked an enthusiasm which will help you more than anything else I can suggest.

I apologise to rob you, Mr. Editor, of so much space, and remain,

Yours truly,

H. W. D.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

SIR.—After having had eleven years' experience as organist, I can sympathise with "A Choirmaster" in his difficulty in getting members of his choir to practise, and beg to lay before him the following suggestions, which I have found fairly successful:—1st. Keep a register of the members names and mark them on Sundays and practice nights; these should be calculated up every quarter, and the sheet hung somewhere for the choir to inspect. 2nd. Always have something new in hand to practise, (my experience is that choirs soon get weary of always rehearsing congregational hymn tunes); for instance, keep a fresh anthem in hand, which will stimulate them to attend, and, after going through it once or twice, by way of a "rest," try over any hymn tunes you may require. 3rd. Have a social tea or something of the kind every quarter or half year, which, I think, will be the means of bringing the members into closer union with each other. And, lastly, do all you can to infuse a brightness and variety into your meetings, as I believe that dull, monotonous practices soon weary a choir.

Trusting that the above suggestions may be of some use to "A Choirmaster." Believe me, yours truly,

AMATEUR ORGANIST.

CHORAL FESTIVALS.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR.—I am very glad to see that at last our need of a periodical devoted to the interests of the music of the Nonconformist body has been provided for by the issue of your very promising musical journal. It will, I doubt not, have a large and useful circulation.

I think the opportunity has now arrived for which I have been so long waiting, when some steps may with advantage be taken to bring all our choirs into one comprehensive association.

Last autumn I chanced to be in Exeter at the time when the Diocesan Choral Festival was held, and I certainly felt very strongly the contrast between the warm enthusiasm displayed by the congregations and choirs of the churches for many miles around with the isolated position in which we stand.

It is true that in some large congregations, where there is freedom allowed to the enterprising spirit of the laity, much is done to encourage the development of our worship-music, but it is only within very narrow limits.

Now, the idea which has been waiting for expression is that a large and representative association might be formed, having its headquarters in London, and active officers and correspondents all over the kingdom. Such an organisation could assist congregations in many ways. We might help to arrange for annual choral festivals or choral religious services in the large centres, such as Bristol, Birmingham, etc., and anywhere else that was thought likely to support such a movement. We might also hold a large meeting of the kind in London, at the Royal Albert Hall, or the Crystal Palace, in Whit week, or at some other convenient time, when the choirs of the London district could be massed, and singers from the country would be welcomed amongst us.

We might establish a circulating library of music, so that a maximum of good could be accomplished at a minimum expenditure, as all choirs belonging to the association would be allowed to borrow music for special occasions.

All this might, I think, be arranged, if some of our representative musicians were invited to meet and frame a scheme, which could be published in your Journal, so that the general feeling of our friends would be ascertained as to their concurrence or otherwise.

Not only would such an organisation be of great service to the cause of sacred music, but by bringing all the Nonconformists musicians together for a common purpose at stated intervals of time, we should strengthen our position by unconsciously helping to remove the barriers which have so long divided the denominations.

Trusting that you will think this suggestion worth consideration,

I am, yours faithfully,
T. R. CROGER.

A VOICE FROM THE CONGREGATION.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,—I said in my last letter that I would endeavour to give my thoughts on Church music from the "congregation" point of view. It is too often considered that, given an organ, a choir, and a choirmaster, a congregation has all that is necessary for worship in music. This is not so. It is absolutely necessary, as a preliminary, that the hymns should be suited to the occasion and to the service. Without this the true end of worship is lost, and the congregation cannot join with reverence or edification. Too often all that is considered by the organist and choirmaster is the beauty of the tune, without reference to the words of the hymn or its suitability for the occasion. I was for some years a member of a Nonconformist choir, in which we had a choirmaster whose taste for music was perfect. Perhaps he erred, if at all, on the side of culture and refinement. But his one fault was that he cared nothing for the words, if the tune satisfied his musical ideal. On one occasion we were celebrating an "anniversary," and rejoicing over the completion of an effort to free our church from debt. We met to practise, and our choirmaster gave us a tune which, although difficult, was certainly very beautiful. I asked what were the words. He replied, "Oh, the words don't signify; it is such a lovely tune." I then said, "Will you allow me to read the first verse?" He assented, and the words were—

"I do not ask, O Lord,
That life may be a pleasant road."

Of course there was an audible smile from the choir, and the choirmaster with great reluctance gave up the hymn.

I remember on another occasion (with a different leader) we all thanked Providence in the month of

June that "the opening year Thy bounty shows." But the climax was reached at a Sunday-school which I sometimes visited, where the superintendent, who was a great stalwart farmer six feet six inches in height, hastily gave out a closing hymn, the chorus to which was, "Little ones like me!" I need hardly say that before the third verse was reached there was an irrepressible chorus of laughter from the irreverent ploughboys in the Bible-class. To remedy all this, minister and choirmaster should meet and arrange the hymns and tunes during the week, and both should suit the sermons and the occasion.

So much as to the hymns. As for the tunes, they should be such as the congregation can sing, and not too elaborate or difficult. The days of solos in tunes have, of course, passed. My father has often told me how in his young days, when "O'er the gloomy hills of darkness" was given out to the tune "Calcutta," all the congregation braced themselves up for a musical treat. There was only one lady who could hold out the long note, "Let Thy glorious morning d—a-w—n," during which the minister (who had a sonorous bass voice, and was the only one capable of giving the famous bass "run") sung as a solo from the pulpit the same words twice over, which, ended, all joined in the grand finale. I think mistakes are often made, and now that hymn-books and music are in a state of transition, it is desirable to guard against this in the choice of tunes in which an ordinary congregation could not possibly join. I fancy that most of us would derive more benefit from a hymn sung with fervour by the general congregation, than from the most elaborate performance by a choir. At the same time I think that congregations should be invited, and, indeed, urged to attend choir practices, and thus familiarise themselves with the tunes, for the best tunes become "hackneyed" in time, and new tunes, if well chosen, import freshness and vigour into a service.

I see I must end, and do so by very heartily congratulating you upon the success of your magazine, which has evidently met a very great need.

I am, etc., PSALTER.

SINGING "AMEN."

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

DEAR SIR,—I am organist of the Wesleyan Chapel in a country town, and have lately introduced the singing of the "Amen" after each hymn to the satisfaction of nearly all the congregation. But there are a few prejudiced ones who seem to have made up their minds to oppose any musical improvement in the service, and they therefore object to the "Amen" on the ground that it will lead to "Church prayers and other Church formalities." Now, sir, I shall be very glad if some of your numerous correspondents will kindly send word to your Journal the names of Wesleyan chapels where they sing the "Amen" after the hymn, so that I shall be able to convince the few who object to it, that there are other congregations beside their own who appreciate that which to my mind is a very proper ending to a hymn.—I am, dear sir, yours truly, ORGANIST.

CHOIR COMPETITIONS.

To the Editor of THE NONCONFORMIST MUSICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,—Believing that friendly Choir Competitions are both interesting and useful, I venture to suggest that if any of your readers have had anything to do with the management of such contests, they would render much service by announcing in your journal the best way to set about starting them.

Yours, etc., F. W.

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